

The Love Triangle

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Summary: Simba loves Nala, but Nala is in love with her best friend, Haiba. Can he win her over?

***Chapter 1*: Chapter 1: Why Simba Loves Nala**

AN: Now, this next story is kind of... weird. But I need to stick in some romance! After all, this *is* about two lovely cubs in love with each other. So, just roll with it. I do love this first chapter, though. It's unlike any of the other chapters I've done before...

Jcoll: Yep – that quote was from 1971's *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory*. Absolutely love that film. I've got a golden ticket...

SimbaPridelands: Thanks for the compliment. Welcome to the madness, my friend.

The Love Triangle

Chapter One: Why Simba Loves Nala

Okay, I don't talk to myself much, so listen up and listen good, me. I've got a bad itch in my right eye and I just can't get back to sleep. Stuff like that just seems to annoy you. And stuff like that really annoys me.

But that's what you get when you're the Prince of the Pride Lands, I guess. You're having a great time, and then all of a sudden the fun gets sucked right out. Most times by a crazy lion who would love nothing more to tear your legs off – and then eat them, and then throw up what's left of them all over your dead body. Yuck.

But I kinda got used to that. At least, I think I got used to that. It's happened hundreds of times. I think I've actually lost count now. Trouble keeps popping up again and again and again – but I just can't seem to figure out why. It's really weird. What's also weird is talking to yourself – but forgive me for the moment. I get that way when I'm annoyed. Actually, I'm thinking to myself, so it's even weirder to say that I'm talking to... You know what, never mind. It's just going to make my brain hurt even more.

I deserve a reward. If I told anyone this then that's what they would say. "Simba, you deserve a reward," they would say. "You need a break. It's about time the Great Kings of the Past shined some light on your tiny little head." Anyone would say that. Anyone.

But the truth is this: I already have a reward. A very special, amazing, wonderful reward that I can't help but stare at all the time.

My reward is a cub. An unbelievably beautiful cub called Nala. With her creamy fur and her bright teal eyes, she just has this... effect on me. I can't explain it, but I love it. And I love her, too.

Why do I love her? The better question would be this: why don't I love her? She's completely flawless, in every single way. She's so perfect. It's hard to believe. I've never seen anything like her. Sure, I've seen girls before, but none of them have that certain... appeal that Nala does. She's incredible.

If she's happy, then you're happy. If she laughs, you laugh. If she cries, you cry. It's almost as if she's some kind of hypnotist – a hypnotist who has total control over your mind. That's what she does. She hypnotises you. You can't help but love her. You just... fall into this love-induced trance.

Sorry – that sounded a little nerdy. But I can't help myself. You see, ever since I woke up this morning, I've felt a little... different. Different in a way I can't even really describe. And it's not just looks I'm talking about, either. I'm talking about mental changes. All that weird... stuff up in your brain. The kind of stuff that makes you who you are. For me, all of that's changed now. Completely changed. And I don't know if it'll ever go back to normal.

The worst part is that I don't even know how it started. Last night, everything was great. I was having a good time – considering I'd just been chased all around the Pride Lands by a bunch of hungry, evil creatures – and everything was okay. I went to sleep – snuggled up next to Nala, of course – and I felt the same way I did every night: perfectly fine...

But then I woke up the next morning. And everything was different. Completely different. So different that I began to wonder if I was crazy or not. It certainly feels like it – after all, I am talking to myself. Sorry, thinking to myself. I'm always getting those two mixed up. I wonder who invented those stupid words in the first place...? Actually, never mind, I'm just going off the point – again.

I woke up the same way, too. A nice big yawn; stretch out a little; and turn to look at the most beautiful girlfriend anyone could ever ask for: Nala. Ah, Nala... just the thought of her makes me feel like there are billions of butterflies flying around in my stomach. Excuse me for a few moments while I stop my heart from beating so fast...

There, done. Now where was I? Yawning, stretching, and then... Oh, yeah, Nala. Yeah, she's great. Moving on – I turned to look at Nala, and then I found out something very, very odd...

She wasn't there.

Now, anyone else would say this to me: "Oh, Simba, stop being such a scaredy cat. She probably just got thirsty or something and went out to get a drink. You're always worrying. Now stop talking to me or I'll rip your throat out."

Okay, so maybe they wouldn't be that threatening, but you get my point. The point is this: Nala's normally there – and I don't take very kindly to abnormality. Hey, I've never used that word before... Anyway, I think anything could have happened. She could have been kidnapped, she could have been murdered, she could have been... tickled. Anything! When you love someone, you worry about them – don't you?

Well, whatever, I got panicky – and that's yet another word I've never used before. So I went over to my Mom, and I ask her where Haiba is. She told me this: "Oh, Nala's at the water hole with her best friend. What's his name, Haiba?"

So then I get a bit suspicious. I mean, who wouldn't at this point? Haiba? Her best friend? I thought I was her best friend! Grr... Just thinking about that makes me mad!

But I think nothing of it. Maybe my Mom just means her best friend that's not in love with her. I mean, there are about a thousand other people Haiba is in love with – and most of them can't even talk back to him. How did I end up meeting such a strange guy? I guess that's what happens when you have such a wild, crazy life...

So, I think, Hey, at least Nala's okay. I guess I'd better go down to the water hole. So I do go down to the water hole, and to my relief, Nala is there. Hooray! She's fine. No damage done.

At least, there wasn't any damage done yet.

So I go over to Nala, and greet her with my standard kiss on the cheek. It always manages to make her giggle. And her giggle makes me chuckle. And that just leads to even more kisses...

But, romantics aside, I need to get on with this story. So this time, Nala doesn't giggle. Instead, she gets pretty mad. Certain things were said and certain people – mostly me – were insulted.

But to my surprise, she forgives me. Phew! I got worried for a second there. Haiba just gives me a look of sympathy. I find that quite odd, but for the moment, I ignore it. I have to find out what's got Nala all riled up.

And then I start to notice the changes. Like, the way I speak, the way I look, and the way I think. It all feels kinda... different. Like my whole personality has been jumbled up and thrown all around the place.

So I decide to ask Nala why she got angry. She takes me behind a tree so we can talk privately, and then she explains to me something horrifying. Truly, truly horrifying.

She explains to me that she has a crush on Haiba, and that me kissing her has jeopardised her chances of getting together with him.

And that's just the beginning of the trouble.

Chapter 2: Chapter 2: Change Is in the Air

Chapter Two: Change Is in the Air

Simba couldn't believe Nala had just said that. She had a crush? On *Haiba*? No, no, no, he must have heard her wrong... That couldn't be true. It *shouldn't* be true! They were together. The cutest couple who ever lived...

Right?

"Uh... Um..." Simba didn't really know what to say. He looked shyly down at his chubby body, and frowned. "Well, I'm sorry," was all he could manage. "I... I guess I'll see you later."

Simba slowly stumbled away, confused beyond belief. Just what the heck did she mean by that? Was this a joke? Some kind of sick, horrible joke between her and Haiba? Because if it *was*, then it wasn't very funny! It made him want to vomit up his dinner from the previous night. That's why the joke was so sick in the first place! It made him want to wretch!

I... I just don't understand what's going on, Simba thought, a puzzled look on his face. *First I'm putting on weight, and now Nala's got a crush on Haiba. Well, she says she has. But it can't be true... Can it?*

Simba tripped down a hill, and landed flat on his face, grunting in pain. He spat out a few blades of grass he had accidentally swallowed. "Stupid grass," he muttered, licking the inside of his mouth to try and get rid of the awful taste. "Why can't it just go away for a couple of days? It'd be nice to have some dirt to play in..."

Simba didn't bother getting up. Instead, he decided to go to sleep for a little while. *Maybe a nice nap will clear up my head*, he suggested to himself hopefully. *Maybe it'll allow me to figure things out more clearly. This is all one big mystery...*

And what was up with the way he was thinking? He felt like his knowledge had been multiplied by ten. As if someone had taken his old brain, and given him a brand-new one – a new brain that was practically *bursting* with information. A whole new world had been opened up to him...

Simba closed his eyes, and slowly drifted off to sleep – although he didn't know what he was going to do about that annoying itch in his right eye...

"Ah..." Nala felt so happy today. Today was the day. The big day. The most important day of her entire life. Sure, she was only a few months old, and her life wasn't exactly all that long, but it was the thought that counted! "Can you believe it, Haiba?"

She awaited the sweet sound of his voice. Ooh, Haiba... she just *loved* him. Those blue eyes and that brown fur just made her tingle all over with excitement. A billion butterflies flew around inside her stomach, like they were trying to break free. It felt unreal. The feelings he gave her.

It all started when they first met. It was a good while ago, now. But Nala could still remember the first time they met so clearly.

First of all, no one would be Nala's friend. Sure, Simba was her friend back then, but she needed someone she could trust. A *true* friend. A friend who she would have something in common with. A friend she could do everything with. A friend who was exactly like her.

So then she met Haiba. It was a funny way for two friends to meet – they had almost ended up *killing* each other!

But maybe fate had decided that they should meet. Because from then on, they were the best of friends. There was so much for them to do together. There was so much for them to talk about. Haiba was truly the friend Nala had been asking for! He fulfilled all the requirements! Never mind, Simba – *this* was a friend! Not just some chubby, nerdy know-it-all who didn't know how to have fun.

And their friendship grew stronger and stronger with each passing day. And as they got closer and closer, Nala began to have feeling for him. Tender, intimate feelings that just wouldn't go away.

"It's a part of growing up," Nala's mother had explained. "Everyone feels that way when they get to a certain age. It's pretty obvious to me what's happened – someone's got a crush on their best friend."

A crush? Nala couldn't believe it. But that wasn't to say that she hated it, either.

Actually, she *loved* it! Her feelings for Haiba grew stronger and stronger, and Nala truly thought that she was in love with him. And – she couldn't help but think this – she believed that Haiba was in love with her, too.

He was so handsome! That rugged chest and those bulging muscles... Ooh, she *loved* the muscles. That was what a *real* cub was supposed to look like. Unlike her *other* friend...

Simba was her only other friend. Unlike Haiba, he *wasn't* handsomely slim, and he *didn't* have thick muscles. He was nerdy, chubby, and had this rather irritating little tuft on the top of his head. Nala couldn't explain it – she just didn't like the tuft. She always made fun of Simba for it.

He didn't like being made fun of. But Nala had told him this: "Simba, being made fun of is a part of life. Deal with it."

Was that harsh? Yes, but that cub needed to man up, some day! If he wasn't going to do it for himself, then Nala had to help him along. "Why can't you be more like Haiba?" she had asked him one day.

He couldn't come up with an answer, and to be honest, Nala wasn't really all that surprised. She always thought of Simba as... kind of useless. Almost pathetic. She sometimes *called* him pathetic sometimes, but she didn't know...

There was a part of Nala – deep down in that tiny thing she called a heart – that knew he *wasn't* pathetic, and that he *wasn't* useless, and that he *wasn't* a total waste of space. Her mind sometimes told her that.

But she ignored that part of her brain. There were more important things to think about – like how hot Haiba was! He was so hot, Nala felt like sweating! She just wanted to pin him to the ground, look into those blue eyes and give him a big ol' kiss on the muzzle!

Her heart was pounding in her chest. Today was the day she would confess her feelings to him. Preferably during the sunset. That would be the most romantic time to tell him. She thought that her heart was actually going to melt!

"Can you believe what, Nala?" Haiba asked, giving her his best grin. *Man*, she was hot! So hot he felt like melting into a puddle! What he wanted more than anything else in the world was to throw Nala to the ground and kiss her right on the muzzle!

That was the sole reason he'd made friends with her. She was hot, and he wanted some kissing action. Other than that, she was just uninteresting. Her head was as empty as the biggest cave in the world, and every time she spoke, Haiba just felt like falling asleep,

But he had to suffer, because there were greater rewards to be had from this. Today was the day when he would confess his love to her. Nala was going to feel the love tonight. He would make sure of it.

"Can you believe we've known each other for three months?" Nala replied.

"I know – feels like for ever," Haiba muttered in response. "But it'll all be finally worth it tonight," he muttered under his breath.

"What did you say, Haiba?"

"Oh..." Haiba chuckled sinisterly. "Nothing."

AN: Interesting, right? Simba's whole world seems to have changed. For the worse. What do you think? I'm sure your mind is *filled* with questions...

Chapter 3: Chapter 3: The World Has Changed

AN: It's good to know that you all understand this story perfectly. I'm glad I made it so clear and easy for you to work out. Ha-ha! Your mind has been twisted, has it not? I've done my job. And now it just gets worse...

626and624: Of course it's me! What do you think I am, an impostor of some kind? Don't worry – I take good care of my readers.

arianastar1529: Aw... Nice to see that my stories are having an emotional impact on you. Yet another job well done. Now if you'll excuse me, I've got a hundred and one Dalmatians to kindap...

Chapter Three: The World Has Changed

Simba knew something was wrong – right from the very start. He had a knack for figuring out that sort of thing. If trouble was around, then *bam!* Simba knew about it. Almost like he was psychic. A sort of... sixth sense. Simba liked the sound of that. It made him feel pretty special – not that he wasn't special enough already, of course.

But this time, the trouble was pretty obvious to see. All Simba really had to do was look down at the bulging belly he had, and he would know something was up. He hadn't looked that way since he'd eaten all that food at King Hapana's pride...

So something was seriously wrong. Over the course of one night, Simba had suddenly put on a lot of weight, knew a lot more than he was supposed to, and his girlfriend was no longer his girlfriend. This had to be one of the most confusing days of Simba's life, and what made it worse was the fact that he was all on his own.

He didn't have anyone to help him out. Everyone around him had changed – so they wouldn't know what was going on, either. It was like this wasn't really his home. Like he was on another world... But that just sounded stupid.

Didn't it?

"I just don't understand it," Simba said to himself, as he sat in the middle of the field he had woken up in, all on his own. "I don't get it. It's confusing. More confusing than seeing an elephant flying high in the sky."

Simba shot a look up at the sky, and then frowned. "Come on!" he yelled. "Stuff like that is supposed to happen when you say it! Stupid sky..." Looking down at the ground, Simba suddenly felt very depressed.

He was alone. No one was going to help him. Normally he had Nala or Haiba to help him out with his never-ending battle against the forces of evil. But this was a different kind of evil. A kind of evil that couldn't be seen or heard. An invisible enemy. Just the thought of that alone made Simba even more confused. So much so that he thought his head might just explode from all the puzzlement.

"So what do I do?" Simba asked himself, hopping to his paws and pacing back and forth around the field, his mind locked in 'thinking mode', as he liked to call it. "Your whole world has changed, and there's no explanation for it." He started with the simple facts. What made up the problem. Maybe by talking himself through everything that had happened, he might just find a way of *fixing* the problem.

"Okay, so that's the problem," Simba told himself. "Now what is the solution? Every problem has a solution – right? You've just got to *find* the solution. Once you've done that, everything will be easy to fix. Nala will be back in my paws, and Haiba will go back to just being... Well, *himself*."

He smiled. Maybe there was a little bit of hope for him yet. "There's always a ray of sunshine in the darkness." Haiba had told him that, and it had turned out to be a very useful phrase indeed. It meant that, no matter how bad things seemed, there was always a glimmer of hope somewhere. And hope was one of the most strongest emotions Simba had ever known. It always kept him fighting. Just the mere thought that he could make it through a terrible situation always made him feel better.

Hope – a very, *very* useful emotion to have.

"So here's what I'm gonna do," said Simba, looking into the distance. "I'm gonna find Nala, and demand that she tells me everything she knows. I want to know all about this... strange new world I've ended up in. Information keeps the brain healthy." He looked upwards. "Jeez, did I really just say that? Anyway..." Simba sighed. "Once she's told me everything, I can start fixing this. And once I've fixed this, maybe I can—"

"Talking to yourself again, kid?" Simba turned around to find the source of the voice – it was Nala.

"Oh..." Simba wasn't really sure of what to say. "It's... it's you."

Nala went cross-eyed and poked the side of her head, sticking her tongue out. "*Duh!*" she exclaimed in a dumb tone. "Really? I never knew that."

Simba ignored her remark. "What... what are you doing here?" he finally managed to ask. He thought she was with Haiba...

"I came to see you, dummy," Nala replied, taking a step towards Simba. "Even if you are a complete idiot, you're still my friend – I guess."

"You *guess*?" said Simba, raising an eyebrow at her. He didn't really like this new Nala... She was far too mean. "Nala, just how long have you known me for?"

Nala shrugged in response. "I don't know. A while. How should I know?"

"Because you're supposed to be my friend," replied Simba. "Surely you can remember when we first met. Was it before or after you met Haiba?"

Nala's heart skipped a beat at the mention of Haiba. "It was *before*, actually," she informed her friend. "You're lucky I found you when I did – these days I wouldn't even bat an eyelid at a... *creature* like you."

Simba's face fell. Oh, yeah... Nala was *more* than mean! "And what kind of a friend calls her other friends a 'creature'?" he said, glaring at her disapprovingly.

"I do," Nala declared, putting a paw to her chest. "I'm just taking pity on you, Simba. You should feel very lucky for my generosity towards you."

"So what about Haiba?" asked Simba. "When did you and him... get together?" he asked.

Nala rolled her eyes. "Simba – you *know* Haiba and I aren't together... *yet*. We're just very, very, very good friends. But not for long, if I have my way..." A sneaky grin spread across Nala's face. "Before sundown, Haiba will be mine. We'll be together for ever, and we can have a big family of our own." She sniffled. "It actually brings a tear to my eye."

"You can't be serious!" Simba exclaimed in disbelief. "What's so good about Haiba, anyway? Why are you 'in love' with him?"

"Because he's kind and caring and passionate and romantic," Nala replied, as if she had said that to herself a hundred times over. "All the things that you *aren't*, by the way. Oh, and I just *love* the muscles. They make him look so tough and rugged..." She seemed to melt at just the thought of that. "Of course, you're nothing like him at all, Simba. You're just thin, nerdy and scrawny. Oh, and by the way, that tuft is absolutely disgusting."

"Sorry, am I really your friend?" Simba has to ask. Right now Nala just seemed like a big bully. "Cause all you're doing right now is just insulting me."

"I've told you before, Simba – it's to make you man up," Nala told Simba, putting a paw around his shoulder, so the side of her face was touching his. "Well, at least you're warm. What do you know – you're actually *good* at something."

Simba looked up at the sky, resisting the urge to moan. *Kill me*, he thought.

Chapter 4: Chapter 4: Nala Has a Problem

Chapter Four: Nala Has a Problem

"So why, Nala?" Simba asked, staring into Nala's eyes. "Why do you feel so sorry for me? What makes me so special? There must be *some* significance to it – otherwise you wouldn't have bothered. Am I right?"

Nala shook her head in response, her eyes closed. "No, no, no, Simba," she replied. "You've got it all wrong – not that you haven't ever got anything wrong before. You have no significance," Nala told him. "I just picked out the first cub I ever laid eyes on. I saw your horrible tuft and thin body, so I decided to... take you up as a..." Nala didn't like the next word. "*Friend*," she finally said.

That actually hurt Simba inside. Right in the pit of his stomach. Even though he knew it wasn't the *real* Nala saying those things, it still hurt. Like some kind of sick nightmare. But Simba knew this wasn't a nightmare. It felt *far* too real for that. This was real. That was for sure.

"Come on, Nala," said Simba, taking a step towards her. She didn't even notice him – she was far too busy admiring her reflection in a little lake to the side of the field. "There must be *something* about me that you like."

"Don't I look so beautiful?" said Nala, as if she hadn't even heard Simba. "So beautiful that no one but Haiba deserves me. Here in the pride there is only he, who is beautiful as me. Hey – that rhymes!" She turned to Simba. "Now what did you say, Simba, you miserable excuse for a life form?"

"I was asking if you actually *liked* something about me," Simba told Nala, glaring at her. "But I get the feeling that I know what your answer's going to be."

Nala laughed in response. "Oh, Simba, I can't say you don't have any comedic value," she replied. "I don't *truly* hate you, Simba. I just dislike you greatly. You are good for *some* things, like... Well, you're good at being scared when I attack you from out of nowhere. And you're also pretty good at letting me pummel you. I think I can still see some of the claw marks on your belly. I would say sorry, but I don't really care. But there is one thing that you are very, very good at."

Simba didn't look very impressed. "And what might that be?" he asked, getting the idea that he was just going to get severely insulted in return.

"You're good at giving advice," Nala revealed, sounding quite honest that time. "Whenever there's a problem, you always seem to be good at solving it. If you *weren't* good at this, then I probably would have just hunted you down and fed you to a few zebras. Nothing personal – you're just not worthy of being eaten by someone upstanding, such as myself."

"But I'm the Prince," Simba blurted out, desperate to use anything he could think of to argue against Nala. All he had received from her was abuse. It broke his heart to hear this coming from someone he loved.

"Ha!" Nala exclaimed. "You think being the Prince of the pride is going to get you some respect around here?" she said. "Get with the times, Simba. That isn't how things work anymore. You've got to *earn* respect – you just don't get it given to you."

Simba growled furiously. "You won't be saying that when I banish you from the kingdom," he threatened. He'd had enough of her abuse. He just couldn't take it anymore. "And I won't let you ever come back. *Ever*."

Nala laughed even harder. "You? Banish me? That's so funny!" She wiped a tear from her eye. "Oh, Simba, this is a laugh a minute. You wouldn't *dare* banish me. If you *did*, then I would rip out your eyes and shove them down your throat so you could see my claws tear your carcass open."

"You're a very violent girl, aren't you?" Simba retorted, finding it hard to believe that this was the Nala he once knew. "I'm surprised that I ever got mixed up with a nasty person like you. In fact, that's it." He turned around and headed away from the field. "I'm done."

He didn't have to walk very far before Nala spoke up. "Simba, wait!" she cried, running over to him. "You don't have to go. I was only... kidding."

Simba smiled triumphantly. "Bingo," he whispered, before turning back to Nala. "But I thought you hated me, Nala? I thought I was just a waste of space? I thought I was a pathetic, worthless know-it-all?"

"I didn't *mean* it, Simba," Nala told him, frowning. "I was just goofing around. Now come on – I need your advice."

Simba closed his eyes and shook his head. "I don't think you really deserve it. Why don't you go and ask Haiba? I'm sure he can help you with your problems. After all – he is so great, isn't he?"

"Simba, I need advice *because* of Haiba," Nala confessed, standing by Simba's side. "Advice on our relationship. Now I demand that you give me advice, or so help me I will take over this kingdom and rule it for all eternity!"

You remind me of Hago, Simba thought with disgust, resisting the urge to frown. "All right, I'll give you some advice!" he agreed, finally giving in to her demands. He didn't think he could take much more of this... "So what's your stupid problem?"

"It's not a *stupid* problem," Nala told him. "It's a very important problem that requires your immediate attention. It's the only thing you're good for – so you'd better start talking. Okay?"

"Fine," Simba sighed. "What is your very important problem?"

"I'm going to confess my feelings to Haiba tonight," Nala explained. "I want to know this: what's the right way to do it? I've never done this kind of thing before."

"Neither have I," Simba pointed out. "What makes you think I know the answer to that problem, Nala?"

"Oh, I don't know, you just know that kind of stuff," Nala replied. "Now give me the solution, please! Before I tear your head off!"

"Hmm..." Simba put a paw to his chin, narrowing his eyes in thought. "Well, I would always try the sunset."

"The sunset? I already thought of that," Nala told him, waving off his suggestion. "I want to know what to say – how to make it as romantic as possible. Now tell me – or I will destroy you."

Simba gulped nervously. He couldn't tell whether Nala was joking or not. It certainly didn't *sound* like she was joking. "Just look into his eyes, and passionately confess your feelings to him," Simba instructed. "The two of you will kiss, and you'll feel like the most important cub in the world."

Nala stared into his auburn eyes, and couldn't help but feel touched by what he had said. "Simba..." She was actually lost for words. "Where do you come up with things like that?" she asked in disbelief.

"Well—" Simba was about to answer her, when a voice rang through the air.

"Nala!"

Simba and Nala turned around to see Haiba marching towards them. He didn't look happy... "What are you doing hanging around with that freak?"

AN: Confusion, cliff-hangers... they're all in this story, aren't they? It looks like Haiba's going to teach poor little Simba a lesson he won't soon forget! Serves that nerdy little freak right... Wait. That didn't sound too good...

Chapter 5: Chapter 5: Simba Takes a Beating

AN: It seems you're all enjoying this story – even if it is a little bit cruel. Especially in Simba's case.

kora22: Yes, Nala is quite reminiscent of Tama, isn't she? But maybe just a little less magical. Simba could sure use Tama's help right now...

SimbaPridelands: A dream? Nah! I wouldn't take the easy option. This story has got to *mean* something. Otherwise it just doesn't make an impact.

Chapter Five: Simba Takes a Beating

Simba didn't know what Haiba was going to do to him – but he doubted it was going to be something friendly. *Where's the old Haiba when you need him?* Simba wondered, watching with nervous eyes as Haiba stomped towards him. His eyes were blazing with anger. This guy had some serious control issues...

"You!" Haiba spat, pointing at Simba between the eyes. "What the heck do you think you're doing hanging around with her?" He looked at Nala, who had this sort of blank look on her face. Simba couldn't tell whether she was enjoying this or not...

"I... I..." Simba didn't know what to say. He found it quite hard to argue against one of his own friends... "I'm just... Um... Oh, no..." *What's wrong with me?* Simba asked himself. *I... I don't feel like myself.*

"Well?" Haiba demanded, roughly grabbing Simba by the shoulders and violently pulling him forwards. "What are you doing with Nala? Answer me! You know she doesn't want to be around you. Just leave her alone."

"How do you know what she wants?" Simba retorted quickly, before clamping a paw over his mouth. *Oh, I shouldn't have said that,* he thought regretfully. *I should not have said that.*

"*What?*" Haiba yelled angrily, digging his claws into Simba's shoulders. The Prince of the Pride Lands grunted loudly in pain, but Haiba ignored this. The little freak deserved to suffer... "Who do you think you're talking to, you little nerd?" he snarled, before throwing Simba to the ground. "I think it's about time someone taught you a lesson." He looked to Nala. "What do you think, Nala? Should I teach Simba a lesson?"

Nala shrugged in response. "I don't know," she replied, looking down at the ground. There was a little part of Nala that was telling her to stop Haiba, before this got nasty. But the bigger part of her just wanted her to let it happen. After all, she didn't want to get on Haiba's bad side – especially considering what she was going to tell him today...

"Of course I should," said Haiba, like he hadn't even taken Nala's reply into consideration. He looked down at Simba, a malicious glint in his blue eyes.

The poor cub was crawling about on the ground, trying to get up. Haiba pushed his face into the ground, causing him to cry out in protest. But Haiba didn't care. "You like that, jerk?"

Simba struggled to get back up again, but Haiba maintained a tight grip on him. For added effect, Haiba dug his sharp claws into Simba's back. Searing pain shot up through Simba's body, and this only succeeded in making him feel weaker, and weaker, and weaker...

Simba coughed up little blades of grass which had ended up in his mouth, lifting his face slightly so he could breathe.

It didn't take long for Haiba to notice that Simba was slowly trying to wriggle away. "Oh, no, you aren't getting away from me," he told the terrified cub, before using his mighty strength to lift Simba up and throw him across the ground.

Simba landed on a medium-sized rock a few feet away, which stabbed into his stomach. He winced, a few tears streaming down his cheeks. He felt so powerless... All the strength he normally had was gone. *Maybe Nala was right. Maybe he really was pathetic...*

"Had enough?" Haiba asked, appearing over Simba. He weakly nodded in response. "Really?" Simba nodded again. "I don't think you have," said Haiba, causing Simba's eyes to widen in horror.

Haiba slashed Simba across the stomach. He howled in pain, writhing about in agony on the ground. This only seemed to please Haiba even more. He loved seeing the little guy suffer. It gave him one of the sickest kinds of pleasure. The pleasure of hurting another person.

Using his sharp teeth, Haiba bit down into Simba's shoulder, tearing at his flesh. Feeling completely helpless and alone, Simba started to cry, sobbing quietly, his tears spilling onto the ground.

"Aw, is little Simba crying?" said Haiba mockingly. "Why don't you man up for once, you big baby? Be more like me." He then laughed. "Actually, that's *never* going to happen. Why waste time dreaming about it?"

While Nala watched all of this, she couldn't help but feel sorry for Simba. This wasn't right. If Haiba continued to hurt Simba like this, then chances were that he would *kill* him. "Haiba... Um, maybe you should stop – before someone finds out."

Haiba looked at his future girlfriend in disbelief. "What?" he laughed. "You've gotta be kidding me. I'm giving the fat little creep what he finally deserves. Isn't this what you've always wanted?"

"I think you've hurt him enough," Nala observed, looking past Haiba and at Simba, who lay on the ground, crying his eyes out.

Simba stared at Nala, a desperate look in his auburn eyes. "Nala..." he gasped, his whole body burning with unbearable pain. "Help me..."

"Haiba, stop it," Nala said, joining him by his side. "That's enough. I don't want you to hurt him anymore."

Haiba just stared at her. "I don't believe it," he said. "You actually feel sorry for him." He shook his head in disbelief. "Oh, Nala... I hope you're not serious."

"I don't feel sorry for him," Nala told Haiba. "I just..." A thought suddenly popped into her head. "I just wanted to tell you something. Something important. Something *very* important."

Through teary eyes, Simba could hardly believe what he was seeing. "Nala... no..." he begged quietly, knowing what she was about to tell Haiba. Already Simba could feel his heart breaking.

"Really?" replied Haiba. "What do you want to tell me, Nala? Is it another one of your secrets? You know you can tell me – I *am* your best friend."

"Well, Haiba," said Nala sweetly, grinning at him. "If you want, you can be *more* than my best friend," she revealed, her grin widening.

Haiba suppressed the urge to grin sinisterly. *This is it...* he thought victoriously. *I've got her eating right out of my paw!* "Nala..." Haiba feigned a look of confusion. "I'm afraid I don't quite know what you mean."

"Haiba, it's just that... we've been friends – *best* friends – for a very long time, and after a while... I started to have... *feelings* for you. Very... *romantic* feelings, if you get what I mean." She raised her eyebrows at him.

Haiba smiled in response. "Nala..." He pretended to look completely shocked. "Are you trying to say that... you want to be in a *relationship* with me?"

Nala rubbed his bulky chest, giving him a flirtatious look. "I've wanted to tell you this for such a long time," she confessed. "And now I finally can. So – what do you think? Can I be your..." She was almost bursting with anticipation. "Girlfriend?"

Haiba grabbed Nala and kissed her passionately. They stayed that way for over ten seconds, before Haiba released them from the kiss. Nala was gasping with excitement, amazed by what Haiba had done. "So..." said Haiba, staring into her beautiful eyes. "Does that answer your question?"

Nala grinned. "Yes, it does, Haiba. Yes, it does..." She licked him on the cheek. "Come on. Let's go."

"You said it – baby." And together the two of them made their way out of the field, passing Simba on the way.

Haiba stopped to look down at Simba. He grabbed the cub by the throat, smiling evilly. "Did you actually think she would ever get with someone like you?" he taunted cruelly. "Nala's way out of your league. And now she's going to be with me – *for ever*." He shoved Simba to the ground, and walked away with his new girlfriend.

Simba felt his eyes beginning to close. He was being dragged into unconsciousness. "No..." he said, before he surrendered to the darkness.

Chapter 6: Chapter 6: Waking Up to a Surprise

Chapter Six: Waking Up to a Surprise

Simba opened his eyes to find himself staring up at the late evening sky. He coughed a few times. His chest was burning with an intense amount of pain. To say that it hurt was an understatement. It felt like agony. He was all on his own, with only pain for company. Asad frown formed on his face. He hated his life. He hated *this* life. This wasn't how things were supposed to be. He wanted things to go back to the way they once were. He'd give anything to have his old life back. *Anything*.

"Hey – are you okay?" A voice Simba never expected to hear again spoke. Turning his head to the side, he could see Nala staring down at him, an awkward smile on her face.

Simba rubbed his eyes, unable to believe what he was seeing. "Nala... is that really you?" he asked. "Or... or am I dreaming?"

"You're not dreaming, Simba," Nala told him. "Only Haiba is fit enough to dream about me. You're not good enough for that. It's really me, which – luckily for you – is actually *better* than a dream."

"But... but why?" Simba wondered. For some reason, he could feel the pain in his chest slowly fading away. As if Nala was easing it, somehow. "Are you and Haiba still... still...?"

Nala nodded. "Yes, Simba. Me and Haiba are still together. It's only been a few hours. What, did you expect two cubs like us to break it off before the day was even over? Get real, you idiot."

Simba looked down at the ground, feeling depressed again. Why did she have to be so cruel to him? If she disliked him so much, then what was she doing here right now?

"Oh, don't feel bad," said Nala. "I was just kidding, that's all."

He looked around, and saw that he lay by the edge of the water hole. "What am I doing here?" he said, sitting up and turning to Nala. "Did I sleepwalk or something?"

To his surprise, Nala actually giggled in response. "No, silly," she replied. "I carried you here. You were in pretty bad shape after Haiba roughed you up. I'm... Uh... I'm sorry about that, by the way," she said rather hesitantly. "I didn't *mean* for you to get beat up or anything."

Simba help up a paw. "You don't need to apologise," he told her. "It's all because of that stupid jerk, Haiba."

"Don't call him a jerk!" Nala snapped angrily. "I know you're jealous, but can't you respect my decision to be with him? Stop being so arrogant. You don't care about anything – not even that I carried you here and tried to help you!"

"Nala, look, I'm sorry, okay," Simba said quickly, not wanting to get on Nala's bad side. He wanted to try and make her like him at least a *little* bit. "I'm grateful for what you've done for me."

"I don't need your gratitude!" Nala retorted. "You ungrateful little idiot!"

Simba sighed, resting his head on the ground again. "All right," he said. "I'll just kill myself right now."

"I don't *want* you to kill yourself," said Nala. "It's just that... I get... snappy sometimes. I can't help it. It's just... something that Haiba taught me. I've got to be tough in an unforgiving world like this. It frustrates me how you can be so easygoing."

"Easygoing?" Simba's eyes widened a little. "You've gotta be kidding me. All I've felt the past few days is completely miserable. I haven't felt happy at all. All thanks to you," he remarked coldly.

"Me?" Nala frowned. "Well, Simba, maybe you should be a bit more mature – like me and Haiba. After all—"

"You and Haiba? Mature?" Simba chuckled. "Don't make me laugh. Haiba's just a bully, and he's brainwashed you into becoming just like him. A few more weeks and you could pass for his clone."

"Well, I will admit he's a little... mean sometimes," Nala agreed. "But he's still very kind, sweet and gentle. And he's the best kisser in the world!"

"So where do I come in?" Simba asked. "Do I even *register* as a friend to you? Is that why you rescued me? Did you finally realise that there actually *are* some redeeming qualities in me?"

"Simba, I've *a/ways* known that there were redeeming qualities in you," Nala informed him. "Ever since I first met you, I knew. I just treat you so badly because... I don't know."

"I still point the blame at Haiba," Simba remarked flatly. "How did you even get mixed up with that guy?"

"We attacked each other," Nala replied. "He thought I was one of the male cubs trying to play a joke on him. I kind of thought the same thing. And ever since then, we've been inseparable."

So basically, Haiba's taken my place, Simba concluded. "And what about me? How did I ever meet you, Nala?"

"Simba, we've known each other since we were babies," Nala explained. "I used to play with you quite a lot, actually. Well, until I tried to make some more friends, and then I met Haiba... After that, I just decided to kind of keep an eye on you. You're like a little creature I need to look after."

"You haven't done a very good job so far," Simba said. "Just *look* at me. I'm bruised all over!"

"I can't look after you *all* the time, Simba," Nala told him. "Just... *some* of the time. Other than that, you're on your own, mister. Got it?"

"So where's Haiba now?" Simba asked. "Shouldn't you and him be making out or something?"

"Nope," said Nala. "He went off to go and take care of some 'business'. That's when I decided to try and help you out. Once I found you, I carried you here, gave you some water, and the rest is history."

"Thanks," Simba mumbled, burying his face in his paws. "I guess that makes everything better now."

"Simba, I just want you to know that I care," Nala told him. "I care a lot more than you think I do. But at the moment, I've got other things on my mind. Why don't you try to make some other friends – instead of hanging around me all the time?"

"I had two good friends once," Simba replied. "And they were the greatest friends anyone could ever ask for."

Nala gave him a funny look. "Whatever that means," she laughed. "I haven't seen you hang around with anyone but me!"

"Cause you're the only one I can be bothered to care about right now," Simba muttered, staring down at the ground.

"And what is that supposed to mean?"

Simba looked up at her. "It means that I love you, Nala." He noticed Nala's shocked reaction. "Yes, I always have, actually. Ever since I met you. And in fact, I actually ache for you, *physically*. Whenever I see you I just want to reach out and touch you and... Well, you know what I mean. That's why I'm telling you – I am telling you that I love you! I know there's Haiba, okay, but... but I think that... In fact, I *know* that we would be amazing together, if you would... If you would just give it a chance."

Simba stared into Nala's wonderful eyes, and awaited her response.

AN: Oh, dear. Simba has either done something very, very bad or something very, very good. This cliffhanger will have to be resolved tomorrow... Sorry, folks!

Chapter 7: Chapter 7: Who Nala Really Loves

AN: I bet you've all been waiting for this. What caused this sudden change of Simba's world? Why is Nala so mean? Is she going to stay with Haiba for ever? Ooh, this is going to be good, isn't it?

kora22: I do quite miss the old Haiba, actually. I just want to punch this new one right in the face!

SimbaPridelands: I know – it was pretty brutal, wasn't it? But I'm a brutal kind of guy.

Chapter Seven: Who Nala Really Loves

Nala just stared at Simba in response, and for a second – but only a second – he thought Nala was going to return his feelings. He thought she was finally going to admit that she loved him. Everything would go back to the way it originally was...

However, he was unfortunately wrong.

In a sudden explosion of anger, Nala lashed out with her claws and slashed Simba across the cheek. He cried out in pain, holding a paw to his face. "How dare you?" Nala growled furiously, glaring at Simba – *hating* him.

Simba stared up at her with shocked eyes. "Nala..." he began. "... I don't understand—"

"How could you?" Nala interrupted. "I'm with Haiba!" she exclaimed. "And even if I *wasn't*, then I wouldn't be with you! You're pathetic, Simba! Apathetic, worthless lowlife who won't get anywhere! Face it, Simba – you're nothing. I hope you die. And I want it to hurt, too."

With that, Nala turned around and stormed off, hating every inch of Simba. She was right, after all. He wasn't worth bothering with. All he wanted was to steal her from Haiba. He just had a stupid crush on her. It was nothing like real love. Nala knew what being in love felt like. It felt—

Nala burst into tears once Simba was out of sight. "Oh, no..." she said, sliding to the ground, her head held in her paws. "What's wrong with me?" she asked, before hitting the ground in anger. "*What's wrong with me?*"

She couldn't understand her feelings. There was something – right at the back of her mind – which told her she shouldn't have done that. She shouldn't have attacked Simba, and she shouldn't have wished he were dead.

But she *should* have said that, shouldn't she? He was trying to steal her from Haiba! That was just plain wrong! Haiba was her one true love! The one who had always been there for her! The one who knew all the right answers! The only other person who loved her back...

I know I'm right, Nala told herself, getting to her paws and walking away, not even bothering to look back at Simba. *He's not even worth my time. I'm going to see Haiba – besides, he's a much better friend than Simba. He doesn't deserve anything from me.*

"... So then the stupid girl actually says she *loves* me!" Haiba said to all of his male friends. The friends that he *supposedly* didn't actually have. According to him, all the other cubs were 'spineless, brainless idiots'. "Can you believe it? She *loves* me! So then I've got it made. We kiss – and she's a great kisser, by the way – and the idiot has pretty much sealed her fate. Just wait until I show her how babies are made. I hear that can be *very* pleasurable."

One of the cubs snickered. "You're a sneaky genius, Haiba," he said. "She should have listened to Simba, huh?"

Haiba sighed, shaking his head and smiling. "Oh, dear little Simba..." he said. "The only cub around here with actual logic and reason. The only problem is that he's a total freak. He would have won Nala over – that is, if she had any common sense. But like I said – she's totally dumb. I don't even think she *has* a brain!"

"Haiba..." a voice softly spoke from behind him. Haiba turned around to find himself staring at Nala, who had a confused smile on her face. "What's... what's going on around here?"

"Nala?" Haiba's eyes widened, before he chuckled. "I was just, uh, well, you know..."

"Who are all these people?" Nala looked left and right at all the cubs that had gathered around Haiba in a large field. "Aren't these all those spineless, brainless cubs you were talking about?"

"Hey – we're not completely brainless!" one cub declared in defence. "By the way, Haiba, what is two plus two again?"

Haiba sighed, slapping a paw to his face. "It's four, you numbskull," he told the cub, before looking at Nala. "Sorry about this, Nala. Good help is so hard to find these days. I'm sure you understand, though."

"What... what are you talking about?" Nala asked. "Are you saying that these cubs are actually your *friends*?"

Haiba realised the mistake he had made, and frowned. "Well... yes, Nala. They are indeed my friends." He put his paw around her, hugging her close to him. "But now they can be *our* friends."

"I don't understand..." She thought she was Haiba's only friend. "I thought your only friend was *me*, Haiba. That's what you always said."

Haiba shrugged. "I lied," he told her. He sneered at Nala's shocked reaction. "Well, don't act *too* surprised. Everyone lies. Even you. You lie all the time. You say you don't like Simba – but I know the truth."

"Oh, really?" Nala shot him an angry look. "Then tell me, Haiba – what *is* the truth, hmm?"

Haiba took a step towards her. "You're cheating on him with me," he said. "I know it. That's where you went, isn't it? To kiss with Simba!"

"No!" Nala cried, shaking her head. "I wouldn't ever do something like that! I don't love him! I don't even *like* him! Haiba, I love—"

"Silence!" Haiba boomed, holding up a paw for her to stop speaking. "I've heard enough, Nala. I know when you're lying to me. I've *always* known. It's not me you're in love with..."

"Yes, it is!" Nala insisted, getting closer to him. "Haiba, there's no one I'd rather be with than you. Why can't you understand that? It's *you* who's lying! We're supposed to be best friends!"

At that point, Haiba burst out laughing, waving a paw in the air. "I'm sorry... I'm sorry, I can't hold it in. It's... it's just too funny." He looked up at Nala. "Oh, Nala... you certainly know how to make me laugh, but I'm afraid that's just not going to help in the grand scheme of things."

"Haiba, what are you saying?" Nala asked. Tears were welling up in her eyes. Was the best day of her life quickly going to become the worst?

"I'm saying that it's over," Haiba replied. "You're just... too stupid for me to be with. I was just going to keep you around for the kissing, but *jeez*! You're a total idiot! It's not even worth it!"

"But we were friends and—"

"Ha!" Haiba cut her off, grinning. "You actually thought we were *friends*? I'd have to be *insane* to make friends with you! Absolutely insane! You're living in a dream world, Nala. I'm not surprised you're so inept."

"But I loved you!" Nala cried, causing all of Haiba's friends to laugh at her. "And you're supposed to love *me*!"

"Nala, there's only one cub stupid enough to be in love with you," Haiba told her. "The trouble is you're too foolish to notice he's even there. Now get out of my sight. I have other girls to kiss..."

"Why, you... *you*..." Nala couldn't control her anger, and leapt at Haiba, tackling him to the ground. She tried to slash at him with her claws, but Haiba quickly kicked her in the stomach, sending her flying onto her back.

Haiba growled, getting to his paws and grabbing Nala by the throat, his claws digging into her neck. "That's it," he said, his voice low and threatening. "I've had enough. I'm going to finish you off once and for all, you stupid girl."

Haiba pinned Nala to the ground. She struggled to break free, but it was no use. "Let me go!" she yelled. "Let me go!"

Haiba laughed evilly, smiling. "I don't think so," he replied. "I'm going to kill you."

Nala's eyes widened in fear. "No! Don't kill me! Please, Haiba! I'll do anything!"

Haiba just laughed again. "Shut up, girlie. It might make this a bit less painful." He raised his free paw, extending his claws, ready to slash Nala in the throat and silence her once and for all.

"No! I don't want to die!" Nala cried, terrified. "*I don't want to die!*"

"Too bad," Haiba snickered. "Because I *do* want you to die!"

Nala closed her eyes, knowing that she was dead.

But then, she heard Haiba grunting in pain, and her eyes snapped open to see that he was lying on the ground, pinned down by...

Simba?

It was Simba! He was growling angrily, his paws around Haiba's throat, ready to kill him if necessary.

"Don't touch her," he threatened, shaking with rage. "If you lay so much as a *claw* on her, then I'll kill you."

Haiba chuckled in response. "*You're* going to kill me?" he laughed, pointing at Simba. "Don't be so ridiculous. You couldn't kill an ant!"

Simba felt a sudden urge. To rip Haiba's throat out and finish him off. It would certainly put an end to all the trouble he had caused him. He extended his claws, ready to murder him in cold blood.

But then, he hesitated, sheathing his claws and releasing Haiba from his grip. He then walked away from him, heading over to his one true love. "Nala?"

A weak look on her face, Nala managed a smile at him. "Simba..." she said, before slipping away into unconsciousness, her eyes flickering shut.

Simba did the most noble thing he could think of, and put Nala on his back, before walking away, leaving all the trouble behind.

Haiba just watched him leave, frowning. A red glow appeared in his eyes, and he speak in a deep, demonic voice. "You win this time, Simba..."

Simba lowered Nala gently to the ground, next to the water hole. Coincidentally, it was where Nala had carried him earlier, after Haiba had beaten him up. Now it was the other way around.

Her eyes slowly flickered open, and she smiled at the sight of him. "Simba?" she said, sounding frail and weak. "You... you saved me."

Simba smiled down at her. "Of course I did," he told her. "I'd do anything for you, Nala. You're my best friend – even if you don't feel the same way about me. And that's never gonna change."

And then – in that exact moment – Nala realised who she *really* loved. It was Simba. It always had been. *He* was the one who cared for her. *He* was the one who knew all the right answers. *He* was the one who loved her back.

"I think it might," Nala told him, pulling Simba close to her. "'Cause I've just realised something. It's been you. It's always been you, Simba. I've just been too stupid to realise that. Every time you tried to show me you cared, I just... I just threw it right back in your face. I concentrated on stupid old Haiba." She hung her head low, sighing. "I'm sorry."

"That's okay," Simba said. He didn't care what Nala had done. She was safe, and that was what mattered. "But I meant what I said, you know. I really *do* love you."

Nala giggled. "I know, Simba," she replied. "And I love you, too."

And before Simba even knew it, they were kissing. *Wow...* he thought, as his heart began to pound in his chest, faster than it ever had before. *That was quick. I wonder why...*

His heart began to beat faster and faster. *Hey... my heart is beating pretty fast*, he realised. *Just what the heck is—*

Simba screamed, his eyes snapping open. "Whoa!" he exclaimed, his eyes wide. "What the heck happened? What the heck...?"

He looked around, and found himself lying in the den at Pride Rock. He saw two figures running towards him, and quickly recognised them as Nala and Haiba. He smiled. *Looks like it was a dream after all*, he concluded, happy.

"Simba!" Nala cried, an urgent look on her face.

"We've missed a day!" Haiba yelled, looking worried. "A whole day of our lives and we've missed it!"

"What?" Simba slowly sat up. "What do you mean?"

"It's the next morning," Haiba explained. "According to your Mom and Dad, we've been missing a whole day."

"Yeah!" Nala agreed, nodding. "What happened to us?"

"I..." Simba scratched his head. "I don't know. I mean, I thought it was just a dream..."

"Thought *what* was a dream?" asked Haiba, noticing his perplexed reaction.

Simba narrowed his eyes, a sudden thought occurring to him. *That felt far too real for it to be just a dream...*

"I think something's messing with us," Simba confessed. "Something – or *someone*..."

"What are you talking about?" Nala asked.

Simba shook his head. "I don't know. But I would like to find out."

The End

AN: Hmm... Did anyone notice the little change in Haiba's personality, there? And what happened to the missing day of their lives? Who caused it? When? Why? Well, this *is* a series – do you expect me to reveal everything in one paragraph? Of course not! Next story...

NEXT TIME: Simba, Nala and Haiba are given a choice between two worlds: one is a dream, and the other is reality. But both of them are dangerous. Can they make the right choice?